

Mission

We advocate for the creation and conservation of an interconnected network of trails, parks and open spaces across the Pikes Peak region.



Bear Creek Regional Park East





A Message from TOSC Executive Director, Susan Davies

Shortly before the November election, a newspaper reporter called and asked me "what happens if your TOPS initiative loses?" It was not a question I had seriously considered. From the first day I took this job 12 years ago, funding strategies for parks, trails and open spaces in this region have been a TOSC priority. This organization has remained steadfast in our commitment to increased public funding as the best way to address an increase in usage.

Unfortunately, the initiative was not passed and funding challenges remain. What does this mean? Two things! First, it means that TOSC will work closely with our Parks department to ensure the funds that we do have are used in the most impactful ways. Second, we will not give up on advocating for parks funding. What do you do if you attempt to climb Pikes Peak but fail the first time? You consider what changes need to be made and try again. We've listened to what the community has had to say and we will come up with an alternative plan. We will get to the summit.

And while the 2C ballot initiative was a huge disappointment to us, 2021 was also a year to celebrate success. New TOSC initiatives contributing to community health and improving our trails are receiving praise from partners. Our Ring the Peak Trail project is being championed by leaders in our community and with their support, we believe we are poised to propel the project forward. Our TOPS application to purchase Fisher Canyon received overwhelming support and it is now our newest open space. Our new Trail Ambassador program is being praised by community members, park rangers and Parks staff. Our new Get Out Get Healthy initiative helped 1,500 families find parks and trails in their local neighborhoods. And our Friends Groups, despite many set-backs due to the pandemic, remain committed to serving their parks and trails thanks to the technical support of our TOSC staff.

None of this would be possible without your financial support. We thank you.

Susan Davies, Executive Director

AT A GLANCE

27 Trail Ambassadors Trained

Miles of new Ring the Peak Trail have been Master Planned by TOSC

Acres of Open Space Preserved in 2021 (Fisher Canyon Open Space)

People who receive trail updates and volunteer opportunities each week via weekly e-newsletter

19 Friends Groups to which TOSC Provided Technical Assistance

Pounds of Dog Waste Removed from Trails during TOSC's Scoop the Poop Challenge



461 Trail Ambassador Patrol Hours on Trails

10 Member Hikes and Bike Rides Hosted by TOSC

100 Coalition Volunteer Opportunities Promoted by TOSC

Patients Received Get Out Get Healthy
Outdoor Recreation Tools
(500 tools in spanish)

36 Parks Meetings TOSC Attended on Your Behalf

5,098 People who visited TOSC's Get Out Spread Out webpage

Advocating for Parks Funding

In 2021, TOSC led the effort to get 2C on the ballot. 2C asked residents to increase funding for the TOPS (Trails, Open Space and Parks) program by increasing the sales tax from 1 penny on every \$10 to 2 pennies on every \$10. This would have increased funding for the TOPS program by \$11M+ annually. TOSC worked with the City Mayor, Council Members, community advocates and community leaders to support the initiative. TOSC also launched an education campaign targeted at the younger population to educate them on the TOPS program, how it receives funds, and what it does for our community. Ultimately, the initiative did not pass, but TOSC learned from the experience and will proceed anew.

What's Next?

TOSC will continue to advocate for additional funding for parks by working with local leaders to determine the best approach. And in the meantime, we will be at every TOPS meeting to ensure the existing funds are best serving the community. TOSC staff will also work directly with community members to develop plans to get their neighborhood park needs met.



Photo credit KRDO



Several communities are waiting for parks in their neighborhood



Advocating for Preservation of Open Spaces and Park Improvements

New Open Space Purchased

In 2021 Fisher Canyon Open Space was purchased with TOPS funding. TOSC staff had toured the land when it was available for purchase and recognized its value to the public. In 2020 TOSC, wrote and submitted an application to the TOPS working committee requesting that the city purchase the land.

Participating in master planning

TOSC is a key partner in city and county planning efforts. TOSC supported the update of El Paso County's decade old master plan with a renewed emphasis on "taking care of what we have" focusing on the Paint Mines and regional parks. TOSC's advocacy doesn't end with the planning stage but extends to opening new open spaces to the public such as Kane Ranch O.S. and Santa Fe O.S. When the city's newest open space, Fisher Canyon, undergoes a planning process, TOSC will make sure the community's priorities are reflected in the final plan.

Working with communities to improve their neighborhood parks

TOSC continues to serve as a resource for neighborhoods that aim to improve their parks, whether it is to help fund painting a basketball court, or to get a new playground installed. TOSC can help facilitate the process.



Advocating for Trail Connectivity, Signage and Wayfinding

Highlighting Gaps in our Trail System

TOSC regularly assesses our trail network and recognizes existing gaps. TOSC works diligently to ensure our local leaders are aware of the areas of concern by hosting bike tours for City Council members, Community Advocates and Neighborhood leaders.



The Youth Advisory Council in Southeast COS working with TOSC to identify creative placemaking and wayfinding opportunities on the Sand Creek Trail



Join the Coalition of Trail Advocates • trailsandopenspaces.org

Signage & Wayfinding Plan for Sand Creek Trail in Southeast

In 2021, TOSC began a partnership with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to develop a signage/wayfinding plan for the Sand Creek Trail in Southeast Colorado Springs. If it's successful, TOSC hopes to use this model in other parts of the city.



TOSC bike tour to celebrate advocacy efforts to get a safe crossing in Southeast COS



Connecting People to Parks

Fountain Creek Regional Park

Get Out, Spread Out

The Get Out, Spread Out initiative continues to be one of TOSC's most popular resources. Over 5,000 visited the website searching for new outdoor recreation sites. Currently, over 150 trails, parks and open spaces are featured on TOSC's Get Out, Spread Out webpage.

Get Out, Get Healthy

With support from the Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs and GE Johnson, TOSC launched the Get Out, Get Healthy Program in 2021. The goal of the Get Out Get Healthy Program is to produce a resource for physicians to give to their patients, particularly in underserved communities, to encourage more outdoor recreation as part of their health counseling. TOSC staff identified easy to moderate trails and created an interactive digital portfolio of curated 30, 45 and 60 minute virtual hikes, walks and bike rides. Peak Vista, which focuses on providing patient centered health care to underserved individuals and families, distributed brochures highlighting the program to their most at risk patients in 2021. The result was nearly 1,500 people seeking information on the Get Out, Get Healthy webpage.



Peak Vista Staff and Patients Connect to Parks through Get Out Get Healthy Program

Promoting Stewardship

Trail Ambassadors

In 2021, TOSC piloted its new Trail
Ambassador Program with support from Great
Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)with the goal of
creating a pool of volunteers that will have a
regular presence on popular trails and will
educate the public on trail safety and etiquette.
Throughout the year, TOSC trained 27 Trail
Ambassadors who provided over 450 patrol
hours on our trails.

Scoop the Poop

Partnering with Heuberger, Subaru and Animal ER Care, TOSC hosted two "Scoop the Poop Challenges" last year. Each event focused on 4-6 popular trails, parks or open spaces. TOSC staff handed out dog waste bags and encouraged hikers to scoop up dog waste they came across while hiking. The two clean-ups resulted in approximately 270 pounds of dog waste being removed from local trails.



Scoop the Poop People



Trail Ambassador Scouting Fallen Trees



Scoop the Poop Fall Event



Friends Groups

TOSC provided over 100 hours of technical assistance to Friends Groups in 2021. From recruiting board members, to lending social media support, to listing workdays on the Open Space Volunteer Calendar on the TOSC website, TOSC supported the 28 Friends Groups in the Pikes Peak Region. TOSC also supported the Pikes Peak Super Friends which provides Friends Groups the opportunity to network and assist each other on a quarterly basis.

Crew Leader Training

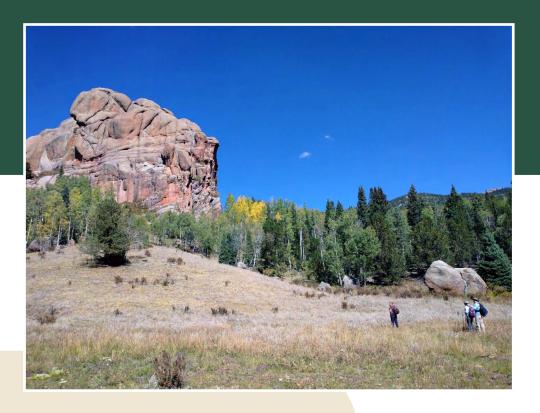
TOSC has been a long time Pikes Peak Regional Crew Leader Training partner with RMFI and the City of Colorado Springs. Last year, 24 aspiring trail crew leaders received training in North Cheyenne Canon Park. TOSC gave them leadership training during the weekend event.

Leave No Trace

Sustainable healthy parks and trails in the future start with changing attitudes and behaviors today. The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. Leave No Trace is at the center of all TOSC stewardship training, and is reinforced in its e-newsletter and social media posts, making TOSC one of the City's leading promoters of this program.



Ring the Peak

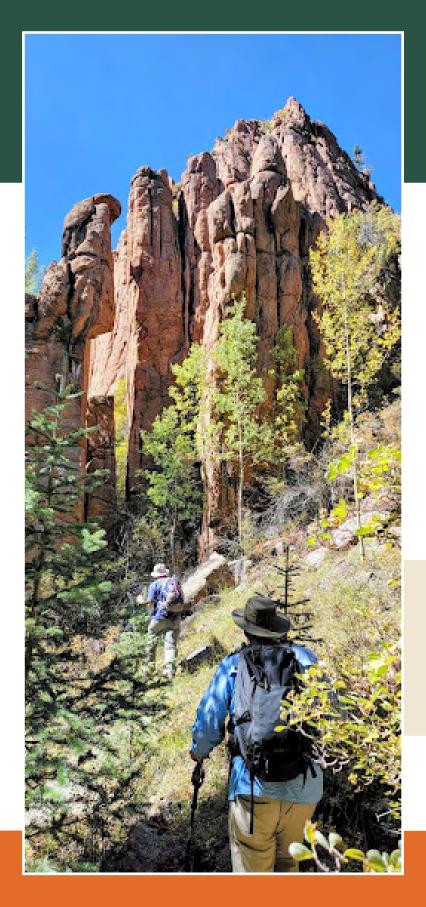


For over 20 years, this community has had a vision of completing the Ring the Peak Trail, a trail that would circumnavigate the Pikes Peak massif. In 2016, TOSC added its advocacy efforts to the project and joined efforts with Friends of the Peak to pursue funding through GOCO to develop a master plan for the southwest gap, effectively becoming the champions for finally completing the Ring.

For the past two years, TOSC's Ring the Peak Project Manager - Mike Rigney- has been working with the National Forest Service (NFS) to survey a proposed reroute of Pancake Rocks, a critical portion of the first Segment of the trail that will close the Ring the Peak Trail gap. After several modifications, last year TOSC received approval from the NFS to move forward with trail construction on their property.



Mike Rigney and Chris Lieber scouting trail for segment 4



In order to secure funding, TOSC has assembled a Ring the Peak Advisory Council made up of enthusiastic community leaders dedicated to seeing the project completed. The council, together with TOSC staff, has developed a 5-10 year plan to fund and complete the project, starting with raising capital to break ground on Segment 1 in the Spring of 2022. TOSC believes that breaking ground on Segment 1 will reinvigorate community interest and confidence that the Ring the Peak Trail will finally come to completion.



Community Events



A dozen families opt outside with TOSC and Hike it Baby

Opt-Out Friday Family Stroll

In partnership with Hike It Baby, TOSC hosted a stroller friendly adventure in Monument Valley Park. Nearly 25 people participated, exploring 2 miles of trails and 2 playgrounds.

John Venezia Community Scavenger Hunt

Together with the Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, TOSC hosted a community scavenger hunt in John Venezia Park to encourage families to get outdoors and stay active. The event attracted roughly 150 people (mostly children!) who explored 1.5 miles of trails in the park.



Families warming up at John Venezia Community Park



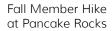
Spring Clean-Up with Northrop Grumman

Community Clean-Ups

TOSC hosted a number of trail and park clean-ups for businesses like Scheels, Northrop Grumman and Diversified Association Management.

Member Hikes and Bike Rides

In 2021, we hosted 10 Member Hikes and Bike Rides including: a spectacular hike down from the top of Cheyenne Mountain, a Fall Photography Hike hosted by Hiking Bob, a hike up Pancake Rocks, a family-friendly Red Rocks geology hike, and a Legacy Loop Bike Tour, just to name a few!





Fundraising

Last year, TOSC relied - more than ever - on the generosity of its members, business partners and foundations to fund its work. For a second year in a row, its signature event, the Starlight Spectacular was cancelled due to Covid.



Working with the Pikes Peak Road Runners, TOSC hosted the The Two Shoes Trek Challenge - a race showcasing several county and city trails throughout our county. Participants opted to run a 5-mile, 10-mile, or 15-mile course virtually on September 4, 5, or 6 in either Monument Valley Park or Palmer Park or they could run a 5K, 10K or 15K the following weekend in person at Fox Run Regional Park.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

TOSC and the Fountain Creek Watershed District hosted a hybrid in-person/virtual film festival, featuring 10 Wild and Scenic Film Festival short films about our natural world. The first five films, hosted by Fountain Creek Watershed, highlighted some challenges the region faces with sustainable water, and examples of how communities have come together for the benefit of all. The last five films, hosted by TOSC, raised awareness about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in our parks and on our trails.



Indy-Give Campaign

Each year, TOSC participates in the local IndyGive! Campaign. This is one of TOSC's largest sources of individual donations. In 2021, the campaign raised over \$60,000.

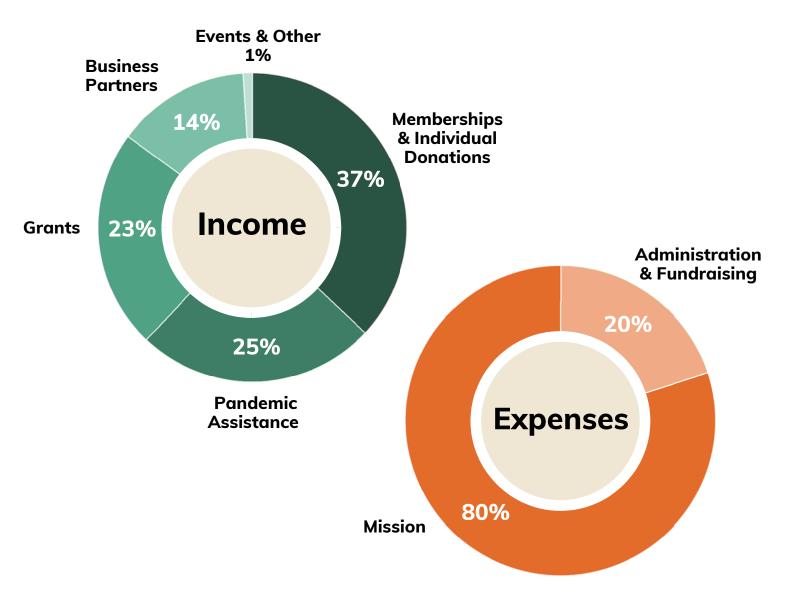
Membership Highlights

TOSC's membership makes up over one-third of its annual revenue. TOSC members showed their passion for TOSC's mission through their financial support and volunteer efforts during another challenging year. Their commitment to the preservation and improvements of the region's interconnected trail and park network drives the work of TOSC.



VIP Film Festival Viewing at Storybook Brewing

Financials





Business Partners



Scheels 2021 Giving Campaign

The following businesses and organizations made financial donations, hosted fundraising events, sponsored programs and events and/or made in-kind contributions to TOSC's mission. We are grateful to these businesses and their customers for their support.

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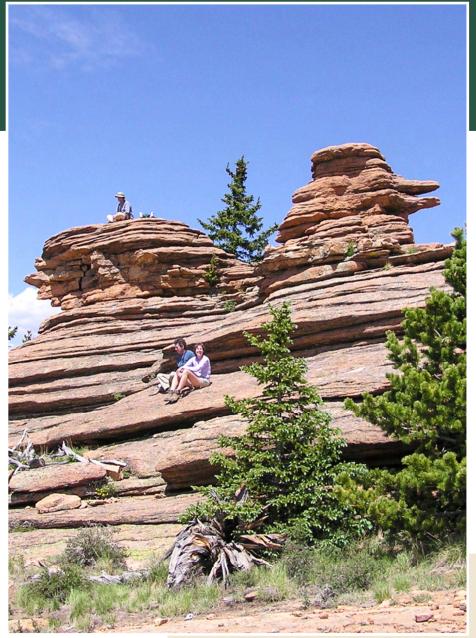
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Mike and Patrice Baum bask in the sun at Pancake Rocks Photo: Dave Meyers

Looking Ahead

Priorities for 2022

- Work to keep increased parks funding a priority for our elected officials.
- Start construction on NFS land to begin closing the gap in the Ring the Peak Trail.
- Expand the Trail Ambassador program to help protect our trails and open spaces and improve the "user experience."
- Continue work in Southeast Colorado Springs to improve trail connectivity and way-finding.
- Support underserved neighborhoods with sub-par neighborhood parks



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